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C O N F I D E N T I A L ZAGREB 002001

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/15/2014

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [KAWC](#) [HR](#) [NATO](#)

SUBJECT: A/S JONES WELCOMES CROATIAN CONSTRUCTIVENESS IN REGION, AFGHANISTAN; URGES ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Classified By: Ambassador Frank, reasons 1.5 (b and d)

Summary

11. (SBU) During their November 11 meeting, A/S Beth Jones and Prime Minister Sanader discussed steps to improve regional relations, current and possibly additional Croatian contributions to resolve international crises, and the possibility of signing an Article 98 Agreement. PM Sanader stressed that while Croatia was looking toward the EU, it was mindful of its responsibilities in the region. A/S Jones congratulated Croatia on its progress toward regional cooperation and Euro-Atlantic integration, while calling for greater Croatian contributions to resolve international conflicts. In her meeting with President Mesic November 10, A/S Jones urged Croatia to support UN activities in Iraq.

Regional Cooperation

12. (SBU) PM Sanader said he would visit Belgrade the following week -- the first visit of a Croatian Prime Minister to Belgrade ever. Cooperation of Serbian authorities in helping locate 1200 Croatsians missing since the war would help close a painful chapter in history. SaM, BiH and Croatia were developing common methodologies and a common register of missing persons. Looking to the future, he and his counterpart would initial the first bilateral agreement on minority protection. PM Sanader stressed the parliamentary support of all minority representatives -- including the Serbs -- for his government.

13. (C) PM Sanader appealed for a strong continued U.S. presence in the region. He noted that Croatia's positive steps toward EU accession and NATO integration were incentives for the whole region. PM Sanader recommended against broadening the Adriatic Charter (A3) to include BiH and Serbia-Montenegro. The addition of weaker partners, who were not yet even members of Partnership for Peace, would slow the A3's momentum and stir negative public reaction in the three countries.

14. (SBU) A/S Jones reassured the Prime Minister of the U.S. continued commitment to the region, stressing that NATO would remain in BiH in a smaller, more focused manner, and that EU-FOR would liaise with NATO. The Adriatic Charter was about encouraging each other, but NATO would make the determination on whom to invite on an individual basis. When A3 reached out to BiH and SaM, it was welcomed as sign of strong leadership.

ICTY Cooperation

15. (C) PM Sanader noted stepped-up cooperation with ICTY -- most recently GoC involvement that resulted in the voluntary surrender in BiH of indictee Miroslav Bralo, a Bosnian Croat. A/S Jones welcomed the recent cooperation, noting that the arrest of fugitive General Gotovina would be essential to Croatia's Euro-Atlantic integration. President Mesic made similar comments to A/S Jones, noting that full ICTY cooperation is in Croatia's national interest.

Afghanistan/Iraq

16. (SBU) A/S Jones thanked PM Sanader for Croatia's sending of troops to Afghanistan, which contributed to the historic elections there. The U.S. was seeking international community support in Iraq as well -- the EU and member states were quite involved in reconstruction and humanitarian assistance. There was a new focus on working through the UN, as elections neared. We would like to see Croatian contribute in some way to a UN Protection Force. In general, we welcomed greater Croatian involvement in any of the crisis areas around the world -- Iraq, Afghanistan, Darfur, or others.

17. (C) PM Sanader noted that he had publicly supported the U.S. intervention in Iraq before the election, but the requirement for a two-thirds vote in the parliament to send troops abroad made an Iraq deployment impossible.

Additionally, there were presidential elections in January and local elections in April that made the topic difficult even to consider.

18. (C) President Mesic said Croatian military contributions to the UN-Iraq mission were possible "under the right conditions." President Mesic said that Croatia was "maximally cooperating" in the anti-terrorist coalition, but he was deeply concerned about the devastating fall out for Croatia's vital tourism industry from a possible terrorist

attack. He observed that the Israel-Palestine problem was the main generator of terrorism and the key ultimately to resolving both Afghanistan and Iraq. Noting the opportunity created by the passing of Palestinian leader Yassar Arafat, President Mesic urged the U.S. to take the lead in reinvigorating the Middle East Peace Process. He welcomed the upcoming Morocco initiative but suggested that the key to winning the war on terrorism would be to have prominent Muslim clerics unequivocally condemn all terrorist acts.

Article 98

19. (SBU) Similarly, on the possibility of an Article 98 agreement, PM Sanader recalled his public comments urging consideration for the U.S. position. The EU had made clear, however, that no accession hopeful could sign such an agreement. If the EU position changed, Croatia would be happy to reconsider.

110. (U) Assistant Secretary Jones has cleared this message.

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